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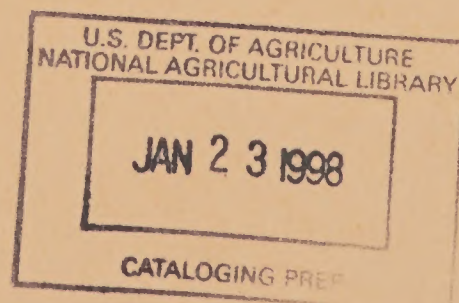
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REGIONAL SMALL FARMS CONFERENCE

Results of Work Group Sessions July 25-26, 1978 Montgomery, Alabama

**Co-sponsored by:
U.S. Department of Agriculture and
Community Services Administration**



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REGIONAL SMALL FARMS CONFERENCE

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Community Services Administration (CSA) are co-sponsoring this regional small farms conference. The conference is designed to:

- Provide small farm operators and opportunity to identify problems that are important to their farm operations and families.
- Develop priority needs and suggest programs that will benefit small farm operators and their families.
- Identify what small farm operators need, as contrasted with what other farmers need.

Follow-up from the conference will include a regional report and national summary of the five conferences. The information and recommendations from the conferences will be used to determine what administrative changes need to be made in USDA and CSA, and as the basis for new legislation and an administration policy for small farmers.

This computer report was prepared by:

J.G. Massey, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas
C.A. Fasick, U.S. Forest Service, Washington Office



REGIONAL SMALL FARMS CONFERENCE

THE SMALL FARM ISSUE

BOB BERGLAND, Secretary of Agriculture

For too long, we have heard predictions that the small farmer will soon become extinct as those farm families are forced from the land. It has been a trend, but I am committed to improve USDA programs to better serve the small farm family and halt that trend.

We believe the small farm family in America is basic to a health farm and rural economy.

We believe the farm family is still the basis of a desirable pattern for American agricultural and rural living in this nation.

We will be listening to the farmer delegates attending these Small Farm Conferences and to their suggestions and recommendations. There will be follow-up action where we can identify changes that need to be made to help small farmers.

GRACIELA OLIVAREZ, Director of Community Services Administration

The Community Services Administration, as the national advocate for the low-income and economically disadvantaged, recognizes the critical need to assist low-income farmers and their families in improving their economic condition and quality of life through resource mobilization, delivery of services and improved access to Federal, state and local services and programs.

RUPERT CUTLER, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture
for Conservation, Research and Education

We have programs of conservation, research and education for the small farm family. In spite of these programs, we are not reaching enough small farm families with conservation and research information through our educational channels.

Do small farm operators need conservation and research programs different from other farmers?

Do small farm families need a different educational approach--more one-to-one contact with a para-professional than group contact?

We expect the Small Farm Conference work groups of farmer delegates to provide guidelines to answer these and related questions with an indication of priority needs. Then, we can propose and move ahead with administrative and legislative changes.

DALE HATHAWAY, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture
for International Affairs and Commodity Programs

The Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service conducts the USDA farm program for cost sharing programs with all farmers that install needed soil, water, workland and wildlife conserving practices. We will be very interested to see what the Small Farm Conferences can identify in the cost sharing programs that should be changes to better serve the small farm operator.

The Federal Crop Insurance Program provides farmers in counties where available with all-risk insurance that repays production costs of crop loss because of bad weather, insects, disease and other unavoidable natural causes. This program is structured to serve all farmers, and we welcome suggestions on how to extend the Federal Crop Insurance Program to more small farmers.

ALEX MERCURE, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Rural Development

Listening to the men and women and minorities who operate the small farms in America makes the five regional Small Farm Conferences an opportunity for the Secretary of Agriculture and his staff to have grass roots input from the people needing help in the rural community.

We believe that rural development in the states is synonymous with improving the quality of living and increasing income for the small farm family.

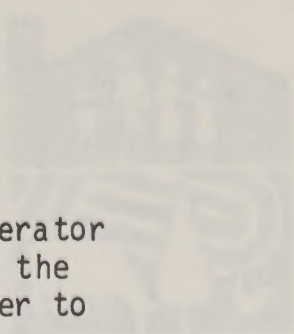
The Department of Agriculture has rural development programs such as the loan programs of the Farmers Home Administration which are designed to aid the small farm operator. We anticipate the conferences will identify any inadequacies in programs that will help us make them more accessible for the small farmer. We will make every effort to change and initiate needed programs.

JOAN WALLACE, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Administration

This administration is interested in co-sponsoring conferences on small farm problems not because there are many small farms, but because they represent many people--over 60 percent of all farmers!

What we need to keep in focus is that people on these small farms live and toil, raise families, have hope and ambition, contribute to society, and produce food and fiber for the nation.

We prefer to think about the small farm problem as a matter of families--not statistics. We believe that the people who are in need of help also have some knowledge of how help might be structured to give the most benefit for the least dollars invested. In other words, we believe suggestions and counsel from small farm families can be highly beneficial in the decision and legislative process where USDA represents your concerns and needs. We are dedicated to providing equal opportunities for agricultural services.



HOWARD HJORT, Director of Economics, Policy Analysis and Budget

We need more indepth information about the needs of the small farm operator and his family. Economic researchers need a more accurate profile of the small farmer and the priority of his economic and family needs in order to make suggestions for improved programs and program projections.

The Economics, Statistics and Cooperatives Service conducts economic research to help farmers market their products and purchase supplies cooperatively. For example, we do field research on road-side-marketing, pick-your-own, and farmer markets in the cities as a method of increasing family income for producers.

Perhaps the farmer delegates at the Small Farm Conferences will suggest ways they believe ESCS can be more effective in educational work with their cooperatives.



REGIONAL SMALL FARMS CONFERENCE

WORKING GROUP I

CREDIT AND CAPITAL

PROBLEM RANK	PROBLEM DESCRIPTION	PROBLEM RATING
1	INTEREST RATES ARE TOO HIGH	4.72
2	TOO MUCH TIME LAG BETWEEN LOAN APPROVAL AND THE RECEIVING FUNDS.	4.61
3	FHA COUNTY SUPERVISORS DO NOT EXERCISE APPROVAL AUTHORITY ON THE SPOT.	4.56
4	MORE FLEXIBLE LOANS FOR SMALL FARMERS TO PURCHASE LAND ON INSTALLMENTS FROM SELLER.	4.44
5	YOUNG PEOPLE ARE NOT ABLE TO START FARMING DUE TO HIGH COST OF LAND AND EQUIPMENT.	4.41
6	FARM EQUIPMENT COSTS HAVE TRIPLED LAST 10 YEARS.	4.38
7	NEED A SPECIFIC LINE OF CREDIT FOR SMALL FARMERS.	4.35
8	CUT RED TAPE IN LOAN MAKING.	4.33
9	NEED HIGHER FARM LOANS AND LONGER REPAYMENT PERIOD	4.18
10	FMHA NEEDS SOMEONE WHO HANDLES JUST THE SMALL FARMER'S REQUEST.	4.11
11	HIGH COST OF EQUIPMENT MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR SMALL FARMERS TO COMPETE WITH LARGE OPERATORS.	3.94
12	NEED MORE LONG- AND SHORT-TERM FINANCING FOR SMALL FARMERS	3.83
13	MORE INFORMATION TO SMALL FARMERS CONCERNING EMERGENCY LOANS AND ASCS SET-ASIDE PROGRAMS.	3.69
14	A GRANT FOR BEGINNING FARMERS, FIRST FIVE YEARS, WHEN EMERGENCY EXISTS.	3.56
15	TENANT FARMERS NEED MORE INFORMATION ON AVAILABILITY OF CREDIT. ARE TENANTS TREATED THE SAME AS LANDOWNERS BY GOVERNMENT CREDIT AGENCIES?	3.44



REGIONAL SMALL FARMS CONFERENCE

CREDIT AND CAPITAL (Cont'd)

16	I NEED TRAINING AND ASSISTANCE IN OBTAINING OPERATING FINANCING.	3.31
17	FARMERS CAN'T GET CREDIT.	3.22
18	CAN'T GET FARM CREDIT BECAUSE OF SMALL ACREAGE.	3.14
19	GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO ASSUME A LARGER SHARE OF THE RISK IN REPAYMENT OF FARM LOANS.	3.06
20	NEED CREDIT FOR SMALL FARMERS' CHILDREN IN FUTURE FARMERS OF AMERICA AND 4-H.	3.00



REGIONAL SMALL FARMS CONFERENCE

WORKING GROUP II

PRODUCTION AND MANAGEMENT

PROBLEM RANK	PROBLEM DESCRIPTION	PROBLEM RATING
1	THERE ARE TOO MANY GROUPS MANIPULATING FARM PRICES, ESPECIALLY WHERE FARMERS HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A PROFIT.	4.67
2	IMPORTED PRODUCTS SHOULD BE PRODUCED UNDER THE SAME RESTRICTIONS AS DOMESTIC PRODUCTS.	4.44
3	THE PRICES OF COMMODITIES ARE TOO LOW COMPARED TO THE COSTS OF PRODUCTION.	4.33
4	ENOUGH CAPITAL TO PUT FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS BETWEEN CROP HARVEST AND THE TIME OF A HIGH MARKET	4.17
5	SMALL FARMERS NEED MORE INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS ARE AVAILABLE.	4.06
6	ADJOINING LAND IS TIED UP BY LARGER OPERATORS AND FOREIGN INVESTORS.	4.00
7	QUALITY LABOR IS NOT AVAILABLE FOR REGULAR OR SEASONAL WORK.	3.83
8	IDENTIFY PROFITABLE ENTERPRISES FOR THE SOUTHEAST AND DISCOURAGE UNPROFITABLE ENTERPRISES.	3.71
9	GOVERNMENT INDEMNITIES FOR LIVESTOCK ARE TOO LOW.	3.59
10	MAKE FEDERAL CROP INSURANCE MORE FLEXIBLE TO ALLOW FOR COSTS OF PRODUCTION AND INCLUDE VEGETABLE PRODUCTION.	3.47
11	SMALL OPERATORS HAVE TO SPEND SO MUCH TIME DOING LABOR THAT THEY DON'T HAVE TIME FOR MANAGEMENT.	3.28
12	REGIONAL WAREHOUSE STOCK OF MACHINERY PARTS IS NOT ADEQUATE OR AS RESPONSIVE AS IT SHOULD BE TO FARMERS' NEEDS.	3.28
13	FARMERS NEED BETTER INFORMATION ABOUT PRODUCTION AND MANAGEMENT.	3.17



REGIONAL SMALL FARMS CONFERENCE

PRODUCTION AND MANAGEMENT (Cont'd)

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 14 | NEED FOR MORE ON FARM CONSULTATIONS BY
PARAPROFESSIONALS AND OTHER TECHNICAL ADVISORS TO
PROVIDE INDEPTH ASSISTANCE. | 3.11 |
| 15 | INACCURATE GOVERNMENT REPORTS OF ESTIMATED
PRODUCTION OF CROPS AND LIVESTOCK. | 3.11 |
| 16 | NEED GOVERNMENT HELP TO RENT EMERGENCY MACHINERY. | 2.33 |
| 17 | INADEQUATE WEATHER REPORTING IN RURAL AREAS. | 2.24 |



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WORKING GROUP III

MARKETING

PROBLEM RANK	PROBLEM DESCRIPTION	PROBLEM RATING
1	SMALL FARMERS SELDOM HAVE ON-FARM STORAGE SO THEY CAN HOLD PRODUCTS FOR HIGHER PRICES LATER.	4.90
2	NEED FOR ADDITIONAL MARKET OUTLETS.	4.81
3	FINANCING MACHINERY AND IRRIGATION (LONG TERM) AT LOW RATES.	4.80
4	LABEL IMPORTED MEAT AND PRODUCE.	4.73
5	NEED TRAINING IN MARKETING.	4.75
6	CONTRACTING SOYBEANS IS A PROBLEM BECAUSE YOU HAVE TO CONTRACT BY THE BUSHEL RATHER THAN THE ACRE.	4.69
7	(GOVERNMENT) OFFICIALS, REGULATIONS, AND ORGANIZED LABOR AFFECT MARKET PRICES DUE TO DECISIONS SUCH AS IMPORTING CATTLE AND EMBARGOS.	4.65
8	HOW CAN I GET LOCAL <u>M</u> ERCHANTS TO BUY MY PRODUCTS?	4.62
9	BEING ABLE TO CONTRACT SMALLER QUANTITIES.	4.56
10	FARM TO MARKET ROADS NEED REPAIR.	4.54
11	FARMERS HOME ADMINISTRATION (EVERY ASPECT).	4.53
12	NO COMPETITION IN BROILER CONTRACTS OR MARKETING OPTIONS.	4.50
13	SUPPORT PRICES TOO LOW.	4.50
14	SMALL FARMERS LACK KNOWLEDGE OF HOW TO USE FUTURES MARKET TO HEDGE.	4.47
15	MIDDLE MAN HURTS MARKET PRICES.	4.47
16	PACKERS AND STOCKYARD REGULATIONS (CATTLE).	4.47



REGIONAL SMALL FARMS CONFERENCE

MARKETING (Cont'd)

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|----|---|------|
| 17 | CAN MARKETING COOPS HELP ME? | 4.38 |
| 18 | TRANSPORTATION—LACK OF TRUCKS AND RAILROAD CARS (FINANCING). | 4.36 |
| 19 | HAVING A MARKET FINANCED SO THAT PRODUCE CAN BE SOLD. | 4.24 |
| 20 | OTHER FARMERS ARE NOT WILLING TO ORGANIZE TO PLAN PRODUCTION AND MARKETING. | 4.24 |



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WORKING GROUP IV

QUALITY OF LIFE-ADDITIONAL INCOME/ENERGY

PROBLEM RANK	PROBLEM DESCRIPTION	PROBLEM RATING
1	COSTS OF FUEL AND FERTILIZER ARE UP, DUE TO ENERGY CRISIS, BUT FARM PRICES HAVE STAYED THE SAME OR DROPPED.	4.71
2	DIFFERENTIAL BETWEEN FARM PRICES AND CONSUMER PRICES IS TOO GREAT.	4.25
3	FERTILIZER PRICES VARY TOO MUCH WITH QUANTITY.	4.19
4	HIGH COSTS OF LIVING ARE USING UP PAID -FOR FARMS.	4.13
5	FARM PRICES ARE AFFECTED TOO MUCH BY FUTURE PREDICTION.	4.12
6	EQUIPMENT AND LAND COSTS ARE DIFFICULT TO MEET WITH FARM PRODUCTION INCOME ALONE.	4.06
7	FARMS ARE NOT BEING TAXED AT FARM-USE VALUE.	4.06
8	GOVERNMENT MANIPULATION OF IMPORTS AND EXPORTS CAUSES PROBLEMS.	4.06
9	URBAN EXPANSION DESTROYS TOO MUCH FARM LAND.	3.79
10	GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS FOR SMALL FARMERS ARE ABUSED BY SPECULATORS AND OTHERS.	3.76
11	GOVERNMENT "SET-ASIDE" PROGRAMS ARE NOT FLEXIBLE FOR SMALL FARMERS.	3.59
12	NEED FOR OFF-FARM EMPLOYMENT TO SUPPLEMENT FARM INCOME.	3.47
13	INADEQUATE HOUSING AND LACK OF PROVISIONS TO FINANCE IMPROVEMENTS.	3.47
14	VOLUNTEER STATE PROGRAMS ARE NEEDED TO INSURE PRESERVATION OF FAMILY FARM LAND.	3.31



REGIONAL SMALL FARMS CONFERENCE

QUALITY OF LIFE-ADDITIONAL INCOME/ENERGY (Cont'd)

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| 15 | WE LOVE THE FARM, BUT IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN TO OUR CHILDREN WHY WE HAVE TO DO WITHOUT SOME THINGS BECAUSE WE CAN'T AFFORD THEM. | 3.20 |
| 16 | EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING PROGRAMS ON RECORD KEEPING AND TAX FORM PREPARATION ARE NEEDED. | 3.14 |
| 17 | THERE IS A NEED FOR SMALL FARMERS TO KEEP ACCURATE BUDGETS AND RECORDS. | 3.13 |
| 18 | FARMERS HOME ADMINISTRATION INTEREST RATES ARE TOO HIGH. | 3.00 |
| 19 | TAX FORMS AND OTHER GOVERNMENT FORMS ARE TOO COMPLICATED. | 3.00 |
| 20 | SMALL FARMERS NEED ACCESS TO GROUP INSURANCE FOR LIFE, MEDICAL, ACCIDENT, AND CROP INSURANCE (ALSO WORKMAN'S COMPENSATION). | 2.94 |



REGIONAL SMALL FARMS CONFERENCE

WORKING GROUP V

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

PROBLEM RANK	PROBLEM DESCRIPTION	PROBLEM RATING
1	NEED TO KNOW OF LOW INTEREST RATE MONEY AVAILABLE	4.67
2	POLLUTION CONTROLS MAY DRIVE SMALL FARMERS OUT OF BUSINESS BY IMPOSING RULES THEY CAN'T TOLERATE.	4.21
3	NEED TO REDUCE FOREIGN IMPORTS OF FARM PRODUCTS.	4.21
4	INSURANCE PROGRAMS FOR SMALL FARMERS.	4.20
5	COMPETITION FROM PROFESSIONALS AND COMPANIES IN FARMING OPERATIONS.	4.19
6	REGULATIONS TO AID SMALL FARMER COOPERATIVES.	4.13
7	NEED SPECIAL CONSIDERATION WHEN IT COMES TO ACREAGE ALLOTMENTS.	4.06
8	MY LAND IS TAXED AT SAME RATE AS PRIME LAND.	4.00
9	INCOME AND PROPERTY TAXES WORK AGAINST THE INTERESTS OF SMALL FARMERS.	3.89
10	SMALL FARMERS SHOULD HAVE SPECIAL CONSIDERATION ON SET-ASIDE ACREAGE.	3.89
11	URBAN PRESSURES DRIVE UP PROPERTY TAXES.	3.86
12	RULES AND REGULATIONS ON REGISTERED PESTICIDES, FUNGICIDES, AND ANTIBIOTICS.	3.86
13	SUBSIDY PROGRAMS DON'T COVER ENOUGH OF THE CROPS AND LIVESTOCK THAT SMALL FARMERS GROW.	3.75
14	GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS DESIGNED TO MARKET DIRECTLY TO CONSUMER (ICC, ETC.)	3.56
15	LOCAL PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW OF PENDING LEGISLATION.	3.56



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GOVERNMENT RELATIONS (Cont'd)

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|----|--|------|
| 16 | GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS FOR PROCESSING FORCES MILK AND MEAT FARMERS OUT OF BUSINESS. | 3.50 |
| 17 | ADDITIONAL CROPS NEED TO BE PLACED UNDER PRICE SUPPORT AND DISASTER PAYMENTS. | 3.24 |
| 18 | NEED FOR NATIONAL LAND USE POLICY. (CORPS OF ENGINEERS ALLOCATION AND SPOT DEVELOPMENT) | 3.19 |
| 19 | STATE GAME POLICIES THAT HINDER FARMING NEED ATTENTION. | 3.08 |
| 20 | BY SUPPORTING CROP PRICES, GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS DRIVE UP FEED COST AND HURT LIVESTOCK OPERATORS. GOVERNMENT PITS ONE GROUP AGAINST ANOTHER. | 3.00 |



REGIONAL SMALL FARMS CONFERENCE

WORKING GROUP VI TOP 20 SECOND ROUND PROBLEMS

PROBLEM RANKS	PROBLEM DESCRIPTION	PROBLEM RATING
1	STATEMENTS AND COMMENTS BY USDA OFFICIALS ON HEALTH OF FARM PRODUCTS, SUCH AS PORK, TOBACCO, BEEF AND MILK.	4.89
2	INFLATION.	4.83
3	GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS LIKE FOOD STAMPS AND MINIMUM WAGE ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO ACCEPT ASSISTANCE AND DISCOURAGE FARMERS FROM PRODUCING AND HIRING OTHER WORKERS.	4.67
4	IN DISASTER SITUATIONS THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD MOBILIZE EQUIPMENT FROM WHEREVER NECESSARY TO HELP THE SMALL FARMER	4.47
5	BUYERS' SETTING PRICES ON TOBACCO, LIVESTOCK, AND OTHER FARM PRODUCTS.	4.43
6	FM.H.A. LOAN CEILINGS ARE TOO LOW, BOTH IN TERMS OF LAND ACQUISITION AND HOUSING LOANS. NEED FOR OFFICIAL DESIGNATION OF ECONOMIC EMERGENCY LOAN PROGRAM. ALSO NEEDS TO MAKE HOUSING PROGRAM MORE FLEXIBLE, PARTICULARLY IN TERMS OF SELECTION OF HOUSE PLANS.	4.33
7	TOO MUCH RED TAPE IN SECURING EMPLOYEES OR WORKERS	4.30
8	THERE IS BOTH A KNOWLEDGE AND COMMUNICATION GAP BETWEEN GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS AND SMALL FARMERS	4.29
9	PROGRAMS TO ENCOURAGE CONSERVATION PRACTICES.	4.26
10	COST-SHARE FOR LIME ON ACID SOILS AND OTHER CONSERVATION PRACTICES.	4.24
11	INADEQUATE MARKETS FOR SMALL FARMERS.	4.22
12	SMALL FARMERS CURRENTLY HAVE SUCH AN UNSTABLE INCOME DURING SPECIAL ECONOMIC CRISIS PERIODS THAT THIS DOES NOT ALLOW A SMALL FARMER TO MAKE FIXED LOAN PAYMENTS, ETC.	4.22



REGIONAL SMALL FARMS CONFERENCE

TOP 20

SECOND ROUND PROBLEMS (Cont'd)

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 13 | CITY AND COUNTY GOVERNMENTS AND VARIOUS FEDERAL AND STATE AGENCIES ARE PUTTING PRESSURE ON FARM LAND BECAUSE OF VARIOUS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS. | 4.21 |
| 14 | BUYING LIVESTOCK THROUGH BY-PASSING MARKETS REDUCES COMPETITION AND HURTS SMALL PRODUCERS. | 4.13 |
| 15 | THE PROBLEM OF LAND USE. NEED A NATIONAL LAND USE POLICY TAKING INTO ACCOUNT USAGE. | 4.13 |
| 16 | GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES NOT ATTENDING MEETINGS FOR SMALL FARMERS OUTSIDE OF NORMAL WORK HOURS. | 4.15 |
| 17 | SMALL FARMERS MUST PURCHASE EXPENSIVE UNION-MADE MACHINERY AND PARTS BUT CANNOT MAKE ADEQUATE ADJUSTMENTS IN SELLING THEIR OWN PRODUCE (E.G. A 400% INCREASE IN PARTS OVER 10 YEARS). | 4.11 |
| 18 | THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SMALL FARMER TO OUR ECONOMIC SYSTEM NEEDS TO BE RE-EMPHASIZED TO OUR LEGISLATIVE, JUDICIAL, AND EXECUTIVE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT AND REFLECTED IN MORE POSITIVE ACTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS SMALL FARMERS. | 4.11 |
| 19 | LAND THAT REVERTS TO THE STATE BECAUSE OF UNSETTLED ESTATES SHOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR SALE TO SMALL FARMERS. | 4.06 |
| 20 | LACK OF USDA PERSONNEL TO INFORM SMALL FARMERS OF PROGRAMS AVAILABLE. | 4.05 |

USDA STATE RURAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

ALABAMA

William B. Lingle
Wright Building
138 South Gay Street
P. O. Box 311
Auburn, AL 36830
(205) 821-8070

ARKANSAS

Sherman Williams
FmHA
P. O. Box 2778
Little Rock, AR 72203
(501) 378-6281

FLORIDA

John T. Woeste
Dean for Extension CES
G-031 McCarty Hall
Univ. of Florida
Gainesville, FL 32611
(904) 392-1761

GEORGIA

Dr. J. W. Pou
Assistant Director
CES
Univ. of Georgia
Athens, GA 30602
(404) 542-7561

KENTUCKY

Richard Wengert
U.S. Forest Service
100 Vaught Road
Winchester, KY 40391
(606) 744-5656

LOUISIANA

Denver T. Loupe
CES
Louisiana State Univ.
Knapp Hall
University Station
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
(504) 387-4354

MISSISSIPPI

W. M. Bost, Director
CES
P. O. Box 5446
Mississippi State, MS 39762
(601) 325-4436

NORTH CAROLINA

James Johnson
State Director, FmHA
310 New Bern Ave
Raleigh, NC 27611
(919) 755-4640

SOUTH CAROLINA

John Tiller, State Forester
State Commission of Forestry
P. O. Box 21707
Columbia, SC 29221
(803) 758-2261

TENNESSEE

Dr. Lloyd Downen
Extension Service
Univ. of Tennessee
P. O. Box 1071
Knoxville, TN 37901
(615) 974-7114

VIRGINIA

Dr. W. R. Van Dresser
Virginia Polytechnic
& Institute Univ.
Blacksburg, VA 24061
(703) 951-6705

PUERTO RICO

Dr. Roberto Vanquez Romero
Extension Service
Univ. of Puerto Rico
Mayaguez, PR 00708
(809) 833-1793
(9) 472-6620

STATE COMMUNITY SERVICES ADMINISTRATION OFFICES

<u>STATE</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>
ALABAMA	Freddie Washington, Administrator State Community Services Administration 3815 Interstate Court Perry Hill Office Building Montgomery, Alabama 36109 (205) 832-3975
ARKANSAS	Geogre S. Ivory, Jr., Director Division of Community Services First National Building, Suite 971 Little Rock, Arkansas 72201 (501) 371-1201
FLORIDA	William H. Ravenell, Secretary Department of Community Affairs Division of Community Services 2571 Executive Center Circle, East Tallahassee, Florida 32301 (904) 488-8466/7572
GEORGIA	Edison McDonald, Director Georgia State Economic Opportunity Office 618 Ponce de Leon Avenue, N.E. Atlanta, Georgia 30308 (404) 894-5323
KENTUCKY	Harold L. Steele, Manager Planning Branch, CACSD Bureau for Social Services 403 Wapping Street Frankfort, Kentucky 40601 (502) 564-3194
LOUISIANA	Harvey Britton, Sr., Ass't. Sec. of Community Services Administration 300 Louisiana Ave Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804 (504) 389-2851
MISSISSIPPI	Jack Byars, Director Governor's Office of Human Resources and Community Services Barefield Complex, Suite 407 455 North Lamar Street Jackson, Mississippi 39205 (601) 354-6592

STATEADDRESS

NORTH CAROLINA

John Edwards, Director
State Economic Opportunity Office
10 East Jones
Raleigh, North Carolina 27601
(919) 733-2633

SOUTH CAROLINA

J. Lee Spratt, Director
Division of Economic Opportunity
Office of the Governor
1321 Lady Street, Room 311
Columbia, South Carolina 29201
(803) 758-3191

TENNESSEE

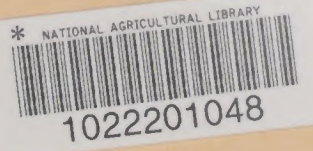
John C. Reed, Director
Tennessee Community Services Administration
444 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 741-2615

VIRGINIA

Howard A. Foard, Jr., Chief
Office of Human Resources
Department of Intergovernmental Affairs
4th Street Office Building
205 N. Fourth Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219
(804) 786-5330

PUERTO RICO

Ardin Teron, Executive Director
Office of Economic Opportunity
Office of the Governor
La Fortaleza
San Juan, Puerto Rico 00901
(809) 725-5920



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